

Message Text

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15

ACTION AF-08

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 IO-13 EB-07 SS-15 NSC-05 CIAE-00

DODE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 PA-01 USIA-06 PRS-01 SP-02

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R 290959Z APR 76

FM AMEMBASSY NAIROBI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9312

INFO AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO

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LONDON FOR SEITZ

E. O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, PINR, UNCTAD, KE

SUBJ: PRESIDENTIAL CONTENDER DEMOTED IN CABINET RESHUFFLE

REF: NAIROBI 4138

1. JULIUS GIKONYO KIANO, 50, VETERAN KENYAN POLITICIAN WHO HAS LONG BEEN REGARDED AMONG LEADING CONTENDERS TO SUCCEED AGING PRESIDENT KENYATTA, WAS REMOVED APRIL 27 FROM HIS IMPORTANT POSITION AS MINISTER FOR COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY AND GIVEN LESSER PORTFOLIO AS MINISTER FOR WATER DEVELOPMENT. ELIUD MWAMUNGA, 40, FORMER MINISTER FOR WATER DEVELOPMENT, MOVES UP TO COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY. AS NOTED REFTTEL, SWITCH IN PORTFOLIOS REMOVES KIANO FROM PREVIOUSLY SCHEDULED HIGH VISIBILITY ROLE AS CHAIRMAN OF MAY 3-28 UNCTAD-IV MEETING.

2. BIOGRAPHIC DETAILS ON MWAMUNGA BEING REPORTED SEPARATELY.

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3. COMMENT: IT WOULD APPEAR THAT MINI CABINET RESHUFFLE WAS PRECIPITATED BY KIANO'S PROSPECTIVE PLACE IN LIMELIGHT OF UPCOMING UNCTAD-IV CONFERENCE. IT HAS BEEN APPARENT FOR SEVERAL MONTHS THAT KIANO WAS IN CONSIDERABLE POLITICAL DIFFICULTY. IN LATE 1975, RIVAL MP'S IN KIANO'S DISTRICT SUCCEEDED IN OUSTING HIM FROM POST AS LOCAL KANU PARTY CHAIRMAN (75 NAIROBI 11250). THIS ACTION COULD NOT HAVE BEEN CARRIED OUT WITHOUT AT LEAST TACIT APPROVAL OF KENYATTA, KANU LIFE PRESIDENT. THEN, IN MID-MARCH, KIANO BECAME TARGET OF SHARPLY WORDED PRESS ATTACK AIMED AT DISCREDITING HIM FOR ALLEGED LAXITY IN APPROVING IMPORT LICENSES (NAIROBI 2578).

4. KIANO'S TROUBLES ALSO AFFECT THE ALREADY BATTERED POLITICAL FORTUNES OF KENYAN VICE PRESIDENT MOI WITH WHOM KIANO HAS IDENTIFIED HIMSELF FOR PAST SEVERAL YEARS. MOI'S OTHER POLITICAL ALLIES WILL NOW HAVE TO REASSESS THEIR LOYALTIES AND SUBSTANTIAL FALLOUT WILL PROBABLY OCCUR. ALREADY, ATTORNEY GENERAL NJONJO, AN ERSTWHILE IMPORTANT MOI SUPPORTER, HAS PUT HIMSELF AT CONSIDERABLE POLITICAL DISTANCE. ONE KNOWLEDGEABLE MP TOLD EMBOFF THAT KIANO'S DIMINISHED STATUS IS CLEAR SIGNAL THAT THIME IS NOW FAST APPROACHING WHEN MOI HIMSELF WILL BE "PRUNED" BY KENYATTA'S KIAMBU-KIKUYU INNER CIRCEL.

DECON 5-1-77.
MARSHALL

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: CABINET, BIOGRAPHIC INFORMATION, PERSONNEL MOVEMENTS, REORGANIZATIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 29 APR 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: ElyME
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976NAIROB04208
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760164-0509
From: NAIROBI
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t1976048/aaaaafxr.tel
Line Count: 90
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION AF
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 76 NAIROBI 4138
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: ElyME
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 17 MAY 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <17 MAY 2004 by BoyleJA>; APPROVED <13 SEP 2004 by ElyME>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: PRESIDENTIAL CONTENDER DEMOTED IN CABINET RESHUFFLE
TAGS: PINT, PINR, KE, UNCTAD, (KIANO, JULIUS GIKONYO), (MWAMUNGA, ELIUD)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006